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**ARTICLES ON  
CAPABILITIES**

by Abbot E. Smith  
and

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## **EDITORS INTRODUCTION**

**I**N September, the Office of Training issued the introductory number of *Studies in Intelligence*. Our purpose, we said, was to stimulate thinking and writing about the fundamentals of intelligence work, and to sponsor the beginnings of a professional intelligence literature. We especially emphasized two requirements basic to the production of such a literature: first, all that we publish will be entirely unofficial and will represent only the opinions of the individual author; second, the success of the project will depend on participation by the whole intelligence community. Successive *Studies*, that is to say, will appear only as worthwhile manuscripts reach our desk; and we will be able to judge the impact of what we publish only as we receive reader comments.

In presenting this issue on "capabilities" we call your attention to a concept whose applications extend to nearly every aspect of intelligence work. Just about everyone, at one time or another, is in the capabilities business, from the case officer who keeps current and reports on the "capabilities" of a national Communist Party to the Board of National Estimates which turns out exhaustive studies on the "capabilities" of the Soviet Bloc. One of the classic definitions of intelligence is, indeed, "the analysis of the capabilities and vulnerabilities of foreign countries, relevant to US security interests." Both authors tackle the subject at its most basic: what do we mean by the word and, if our meaning is not always clear and consistent, what should we mean? What experience do we draw on in analyzing "capabilities" and how, in specific cases, does the analysis proceed?

Both Abbot E. Smith [redacted] bring to bear on the subject an abundance of experience in intelligence (specifically in capabilities analysis) and related fields. Mr. Smith, a Rhodes Scholar and a distinguished historian, has taught at

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ii

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The two articles that follow by no means exhaust the subject at hand — it is much too broad and involves too many side-issues for that. At least two directly related problems, each worth a *Study* in itself, have occurred to us as we have reflected on Mr. Smith's [redacted] contributions. One is the problem of the special characteristics of *national*, as distinct from departmental, intelligence. To put it in the form of a question: to what extent is the experience and the methodology of, e.g., military intelligence directly applicable to the production of national intelligence? The terminology has carried over, to be sure; but in Mr. Smith's [redacted] articles there are differences in usage of the capabilities concept that may result in part from basic differences in the problems the national and the military intelligence officer are asked to solve. Then, too, there is the problem, raised in both articles, of the lack of a national G-3 — which may, again, complicate the process of applying the systematic and time-tested methodology of the military intelligence officer to national intelligence. And surely there are many other problems of "capabilities" that could usefully be addressed in subsequent issues of this series; these are but two of the more obvious.

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We invite suggestions and prospectuses, therefore, for some of these unwritten *Studies* and comments on the present one — comments which we would like also to publish in subsequent

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iii

issues. To repeat something we think bears a lot of repeating: if indeed these *Studies in Intelligence* are to help in the airing of intelligence principles and methods, in the recapturing of experience, and eventually in the building of authoritative doctrine, then we are going to need the advice and the participation of every member of the intelligence profession to do the job well.

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## NOTES ON "CAPABILITIES" IN NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE

by Abbot E. Smith

### I

WHEN CIA was established with the mission of producing "national" intelligence it perforce drew heavily for doctrine upon the military intelligence agencies. Over the years, the intelligence organizations of the armed forces had developed a well-tested routine. Formulas were available to meet various requirements. Agreement had gradually been reached on what needed to be known about the enemy, what data were necessary for the estimate, why they were necessary, and how they could most usefully be presented. CIA had no counterpart to this doctrine. It therefore frequently borrowed from the military, and in no instance was this borrowing more conspicuous than in the matter of "capabilities."

The doctrine of enemy capabilities is one of the most characteristic and useful that military intelligence has to offer. A *capability* is a course of action or a faculty for development which lies within the capacity of the person or thing concerned. More particularly, in military intelligence, enemy capabilities are courses of action of which the enemy is physically capable and which would, if adopted and carried through, affect our own commander's mission.\* In short, a list of enemy capabili-

\* "*capabilities, enemy*" — Those courses of action of which the enemy is physically capable and which if adopted will affect the accomplishment of our mission. The term "capabilities" includes not only the general courses of action open to the enemy such as attack, defense, or withdrawal but also all the particular courses of action possible under each general course of action. "Enemy capabilities" are considered in the light of all known factors affecting military operations including time, space, weather, terrain, and the strength and disposition of enemy forces . . ." *Dictionary of United States Military Terms for Joint Usage*, issued by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

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ties is a list of the things that the enemy can *do*. It is therefore apt to be the most significant part of a military intelligence officer's "Estimate of the Enemy Situation."

It is true, of course, that a military intelligence officer collects and transmits to his commander a great deal of other information. He reports on the weather, terrain, and communications in the zone of operations. He may set forth the politics and economics of the area. He collects and evaluates data on the enemy's order of battle, logistical apparatus, equipment, weapons, morale, training and the like. All this is made known to the commander, but it is still not a statement of enemy capabilities. Only when the intelligence officer has acquired all this information, and constructively brooded over it, can he set about describing the courses of action open to the enemy. It is this list of capabilities that tells the commander what, under the conditions existing in the area, the enemy can *do* with his troops, his weapons, and his equipment to affect the commander's own mission. The enumeration and description of enemy capabilities is the ultimate, or at least the penultimate, goal of military intelligence. It is one of the characteristic modes to which the great mass of intelligence information available is bent, in order to give the commander the knowledge of the enemy he needs to plan his own operations.

Adaptation of this doctrine to the requirements of national intelligence presents at first no real difficulty. Courses of action may be attributed to persons, organizations, parties, nations, or groups of nations as well as to military units, and to friendly or neutral, as well as to enemy, powers. They may be political, economic, psychological, diplomatic, and so on, as well as military. It is true that a national intelligence estimate\* is not made for a military commander with a clearly defined

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\* Throughout this paper the term "national intelligence estimate" is used generally to mean not just the solemnly coordinated "National Intelligence Estimates" approved by the Intelligence Advisory Committee, but any estimate, great or small, made by any office or person producing national intelligence.

mission, to which enemy capabilities may be referred to ascertain if they do in fact "affect" the carrying-out of that mission. An equivalent for the commander's mission is not far to seek, however, since national intelligence is obviously concerned only with foreign courses of action which may affect the policies or interests — above all the security interests — of the United States. It is by no means as easy to be clear about all the policies and interests of the United States, and to perceive what might affect them, as it is to understand the mission of a military commander, which is supposed to be unequivocally stated in a directive from higher authority. But this is one of the reasons why a national intelligence estimate is apt to be more difficult to prepare than a military estimate of an enemy situation.

In national intelligence, then, capabilities may be defined as *courses of action within the power of a foreign nation or organization which would, if carried out, affect the security interests of the United States.*

It is probably unnecessary to argue that statements of capabilities are useful as a means of organizing and presenting national intelligence. The parallel with military intelligence doctrine seems perfectly sound. High policy-makers doubtless want to be supplied with authoritative descriptions and analyses of the politics, economics, and military establishments of various foreign nations, together with explanations of the objectives, policies, and habitual modes of action of these nations. They need to have the best possible statistics, diagrams, pictures, and data in general. But when all the labor and research has been finished, the results collated and criticized, and the conclusions written down, it will still be worthwhile to go on to a statement of what each foreign nation or organization can *do* to affect the interests of the United States. This is the statement of capabilities.

In recognizing, formulating, testing, and presenting foreign capabilities, intelligence doctrine comes into its own. Apart from the special function of intelligence operations in collecting

data, most of the preliminary spade-work for intelligence estimates is the province of other disciplines than that specifically of intelligence. This spade-work of course takes nine-tenths of the time, trouble, and space devoted to any estimate. Political scientists analyze the structure of government and politics in a foreign state; economists lay bare its economic situation; order-of-battle men reveal the condition of the military establishment; sociologists, historians, philosophers, natural scientists, and all manner of experts make their contribution. When all this has been done it is the peculiar function of intelligence itself to see that the learning and wisdom of experts is directed towards determining what the foreign nation can *do* to affect US interests. Thereby the major disciplines of social and natural science are turned to the special requirements of intelligence estimates.

Let us be careful not to confuse this with the function of prophecy. To predict what a foreign nation *will* do is a necessary and useful pursuit, albeit dangerous; it rests on knowledge, judgment, experience, divination, and luck. To set forth what a nation *can* do is a different matter. One still needs judgment, experience and luck as well as knowledge, but soothsaying is reduced to a minimum. There is an element of the scientific. The job can be taught, and its techniques refined. It can be reduced to doctrine.

II

Generally speaking, in military usage an enemy capability is stated without reference to the possible counteractions which one's own commander may devise to offset or prevent such action. The Navy's handbook entitled *Sound Military Decision* puts it this way (italics added): "Capabilities . . . indicate actions which the force concerned, *unless forestalled or prevented from taking such actions*, has the capacity to carry out."

Here are three examples:

- a. The Bloc has the capability to launch large-scale, short-haul amphibious operations in the Baltic and Black Seas.
- b. The USSR has the capability to launch general war.
- c. The Chinese Communists have the capability to commit and to support approximately 150,000 troops in Indochina.

These statements give no estimate of what the effects or results of any of these courses of action might be. There is no indication for example that the United States or some other power might be able to make it difficult or impossible for the Chinese Communists to support 150,000 troops in Indochina, or that the West might possess such strength that a Soviet decision to launch general war would be tantamount to suicide. The statements simply lay down what the nations concerned could do, without regard to any possible opposition or counter-action. Such unopposed capabilities are frequently referred to as "gross" or "raw" capabilities. They are the kind of enemy capabilities which are reported to a military commander by his G-2, in the "Estimate of the Enemy Situation."

The high policy-makers for whom national intelligence is designed, however, are not in the comparatively simple position of military commanders facing an enemy. They have broader fields to cover, and more numerous problems to face. They need to have a picture of the security situation in the world as a whole and in various areas of the world. This picture ought to show not only the multifarious forces which exist, but also the probable resultants of these forces as they act upon each other, or as they might act upon each other if they were set in motion. The policy-makers need, in short, to know about *net* capabilities, not merely about gross or raw capabilities.

This is well understood and accepted as long as the courses of action of foreign nations alone are concerned. Nobody would think of enumerating the capabilities of France, for example, without giving due consideration to the frequently opposing capabilities of Germany, and to the tangential capa-

bilities of Great Britain and other powers. Even in the purely military sphere, statements of net capabilities occur in national estimates. For example:

- a. In Israel, an army of 49,000 . . . is capable of defeating any of its immediate neighbors.
- b. The Chinese Communists have the capability for conquering Burma.
- c. We believe that the Chinese Communists are capable of taking the island of Quemoy if opposed by Chinese Nationalist forces only.

It is an intricate and difficult operation even to attempt to work out the probable resultants of the enormous forces actually or potentially at work in the world — political, economic, military, and the like. Without such an operation, however — sometimes called "war-gaming" when limited strictly to the military sphere — national intelligence estimates of capabilities would lose much of their usefulness for the particular purpose they are designed to serve.

Obviously no estimate of the security situation anywhere in the world will be worth much unless the capabilities of the United States are taken into account and their effect weighed. At this point, however, grave practical difficulties arise. We of the intelligence community are solemnly warned that we must not "G-2 our own policy." Military authorities are shocked at the suggestion that we should indulge in "war-gaming." We are told that it is the function of the commander, not of the intelligence officer, to decide what counteraction to adopt against enemy capabilities, and to judge what the success of such counteraction may be. It is pointed out that no adequate estimate of net military capabilities can be made without a full knowledge of US war plans, and a long and highly technical exercise in war-gaming by large numbers of qualified experts. Since intelligence agencies as such quite properly have no knowledge of US war plans, and possess no elaborate machinery for war-gaming, they are estopped from making

SECRET

7

an estimate of *net* capabilities where US forces are significantly involved. As a result there is, for instance, no statement in any national intelligence estimate of how the military security situation on the continent of Europe really stands, i. e., of the probable net capabilities of Soviet forces against the opposition they would be likely to meet if they attempted an invasion of the continent.

This state of affairs is unfortunate, and the value of national intelligence estimates is thereby reduced below what it ought to be. The difficulty is really not one of intelligence doctrine, however. Practically nobody doubts that high policy-makers ought to be supplied with estimates of net capabilities even in situations where the US is actively engaged. It is agreed that they ought to have the best possible opinion on the security situation on the continent of Europe, and that they must be informed not merely of the gross capabilities of the USSR to launch air and other attacks on the US (the subject of an annual National Intelligence Estimate) but of what the USSR could probably accomplish by such an attack against the defenses that the US and its allies would put up. In one way or another policy-makers get such estimates of net capabilities, even if they have sometimes to make them themselves, off the cuff.

The question is, then, not whether estimates of net capabilities are legitimate requirements, but simply who shall make them. This problem is outside the scope of a paper on intelligence doctrine. It may be suggested, however, that the difficulty has probably been somewhat exaggerated. The jealous prohibition of "war-gaming," on grounds that to conduct it requires a knowledge of US war plans and an enormous apparatus with numerous personnel, is overdone. In four out of five situations where an estimate of net military capabilities is needed the judgment of wise and experienced military men, based on only a general knowledge of US war plans, is likely to be about as useful as the most elaborate and protracted piece of war-gaming. Such exercises have too often given the

SECRET

wrong answer — they are really no more dependable as guides to the outcome of future wars than research in economics is dependable as an indicator of the future behavior of the stock market. This does not mean, of course, that economics and war-gaming are useless pursuits.

Gradually, indeed, the difficulties respecting estimates of net capabilities are disappearing. In the most critical situations — air attack on the United States, for example, and perhaps the security situation in Europe — it may be necessary to establish special machinery for the most careful playing-out of the problems and ascertainment of net capabilities. In less critical situations the trouble is solving itself. Military men are becoming a little less shy of making an educated guess as to net capabilities, even when US forces are involved, and the community is not as distressed as it used to be at the accusation of "G-2-ing US policy." A doctrine is gradually being evolved by trial and error, which is as it should be. Some day it may be desirable to commit the evolved doctrine to writing, but the time has not yet arrived.

III

Of course any foreign nation of consequence is physically capable of a vast number of courses of action which would affect the security interests of the United States. One task of intelligence (after the spade-work is complete) is to recognize these capabilities; another is to test them against known facts to make certain that they are real and not imaginary; a third is to test them one against another to see how many could be carried out simultaneously, and how many may be mutually exclusive; a fourth is to work out in reasonable detail the implications, for the nation concerned and for the United States, of the actual implementation of each important capability. I propose to pass over all these tasks without further discussion, and to concentrate on the problem of selecting from

SECRET

9

among the capabilities those which are to be included in the formal estimate. For even after all the testing is finished there will still remain far too many capabilities to put into any document of reasonable size. Considerations of space, time, and the patience of readers make it imperative that some principles of exclusion be adopted, so that the list of capabilities presented will be useful rather than merely exhaustive.

Capabilities are excluded from national estimates for one of two reasons: either because they are judged unlikely to be actually adopted and carried through, or because they are considered to be so insignificant that they could be implemented without more than minor effect on the security interests of the United States. For short we may say that they are excluded on grounds either of improbability or of unimportance.

The second of these criteria does not require much discussion. Clearly it would be a waste of time and paper to fill a national estimate with lists of courses of action which, even if carried out, would affect the security interests of the United States only to an insignificant degree. One applies common sense in this matter, and forthwith rejects a great number of capabilities from further consideration. Along with common sense, however, there ought always to be plenty of specialized knowledge available. Everyone knows that an expert can sometimes point out major significance in things which are to the uninformed view negligible, and conversely that experts will sometimes inflate the importance of things which common sense and general knowledge can see in juster proportion. Out of discussion and argument on these matters comes the best verdict as to the importance or unimportance of a given foreign capability, and the best guidance as to whether it should be put into the formal estimate.

To reject any foreign capability because we judge it unlikely to be implemented is a more serious and difficult matter. Here indeed we part company with military doctrine, which frowns upon the exclusion from an estimate of any enemy capabilities whatever, and especially condemns any exclusion on grounds

SECRET

of improbability. There has been much debate, among the military, on whether an intelligence officer should presume to put into his formal estimate an opinion as to which of the enemy capabilities listed is most likely to be implemented. It has been said that such a judgment is for the commander alone to make, and some have even held that the commander himself must not make it, but must treat all enemy capabilities as if they were sure to be carried through, and must prepare to deal with them all. This latter doctrine is somewhat academic. It is doubtful that any intelligence officer, or any commander worth his salt, has ever acted strictly in accordance with it. Yet it remains that according to the more rigorous teachings of military intelligence no enemy capability of any consequence may be omitted from the list presented to the commander. The disasters which can result from even a carefully considered exclusion have been frequently pointed out.

Nevertheless, in a national intelligence estimate we must for the reasons already stated exclude many foreign capabilities because we judge them unlikely to be carried out. The unlikelihood is in turn generally established on one or more of three grounds, namely, that implementation of the capability (a) would be unrelated to, or incompatible with, national objectives of the country under consideration; (b) would run counter to the political, moral, or psychological compulsions under which the nation, or its rulers, operate; or (c) would entail consequences so adverse as to be unprofitable.

The most obvious capabilities to exclude are those which, if implemented, would serve no objective of the nation under consideration, or would clearly run counter to some of that nation's objectives. Thus we do not bother about the possibility that the British might conquer Iceland, although they certainly could do so and if they did US security interests would be affected. The conquest of Iceland, however, would serve no British objective that we know of, at least in time of peace. Again, it is clearly within the power of the USSR to give up its Satellites, renounce its connections with Commu-

SECRET

11

nist China, and retire modestly into isolation. Or the British might, in order to improve their economic condition, abandon all armaments and cease to be a world power. We do not give such capabilities serious consideration, however, because we believe them manifestly contrary to the fundamental aims of the Soviets and British respectively. By applying this sort of standard we can immediately reject a great number of courses of action which lie within the power of the nation concerned and which would affect US security interests.

One must be careful in using this test, however, for national objectives change, sometimes with changes in government, sometimes without. It is, for example, impossible to be sure about the objectives which will determine West German policy in years to come. Even the Soviets do not always appear to the Western view to act in such a fashion as to serve what we estimate to be their real aims. Moreover, all nations have various objectives, many of which are to some degree incompatible with each other. Sometimes one is governing, sometimes another. Nations can even pursue simultaneously several conflicting objectives, to the confusion of their own citizenry as well as of foreign intelligence officers. We must be very certain, before rejecting a foreign capability as incompatible with a national objective, that the objective is genuine, deeply-felt, and virtually certain to govern the nation's courses of action.

The political, moral, or psychological compulsions which operate on a nation, or on its rulers, make the implementation of some of that nation's physical capabilities unlikely or even impossible. Thus, for example, it would probably be judged that the US is unlikely to undertake a strictly "preventive" war against the USSR because such an action, under any foreseeable US government, would be politically and morally unthinkable. It may similarly be true that the Soviet rulers are psychologically unable to establish a genuine state of peaceful coexistence with capitalist states even though they may proclaim their desire to do so and may judge such a

SECRET

course of action conducive to the ultimate aims of Communism. There are some things that nations cannot do, despite the fact that they are physically capable of doing them and might serve their national objectives thereby.

To be sure, if a nation is politically, morally, or psychologically incapable of pursuing a given course of action that course of action is not a capability at all, and we need not worry about it. The trouble is, however, that while physical incapacabilities can generally be pretty satisfactorily established the same is rarely true of political, moral, or psychological incapacabilities. One must depend more on judgment and less upon demonstrable certainty for an estimate in the matter. Not many would have estimated, before the fact, that Tito would be psychologically capable of turning against Stalin, or that the Germans would be morally capable of supporting Hitler, or that the United States would be politically capable of abandoning isolationism. Experience warns us against undue confidence in our estimates of national character, and it will be safer to consider as capabilities all courses of action which a nation is physically able to carry through, rejecting many as improbable but none as impossible.

Finally, we reject from our estimate those capabilities which would, if implemented, lead to such adverse consequences as to be unprofitable. There are, curiously enough, very few foreign capabilities which will pass the tests already mentioned, and then have to be excluded on this ground. This is because most courses of action having indubitably dire consequences will by reason of that fact alone run counter to the objectives or to the political, moral, or psychological compulsions of the nation. Those few which are left are generally military in nature and are apt to be so important that we include them in the estimate anyway. Thus it is clear that general war with the US would be hazardous and perhaps disastrous for the USSR. It therefore seems highly improbable that the Soviets will deliberately run grave risks of involving themselves in such a war, yet no national estimate on the USSR would

omit mention of the capabilities of that nation for conducting war with the US. The same holds true for the capabilities of the Nationalist Chinese to invade the mainland, or of the South Koreans to attack North Korea. We may judge such capabilities improbable of implementation, but we do not exclude them from our estimate.

By applying the tests of importance and of probability, as described above, the vast number of capabilities of any foreign nation will speedily be reduced to manageable proportions. The process of exclusion will at first be almost unconscious — most capabilities will be rejected forthwith, without doubt or debate. When this stage has been accomplished, however, there will still remain a formidably long list which will require more serious consideration. Exclusion becomes more difficult, and begins to require longer discussion and maturer judgment. The same criteria of choice continue valid, but are applied with more deliberation. This is the point at which preparation of the estimate gets interesting, for the choice of capabilities to include or exclude may prove to be the most crucial decision made during the estimating process.

Though we have departed from the military doctrine in allowing a rejection of capabilities judged unlikely of implementation, we may still return to it for an important lesson. Like the military commander, the high policy-maker is entitled to something more than intelligence's opinion of what foreign nations will probably do. He is entitled to be informed of various reasonable alternative possibilities, and to be given some discussion of these alternatives — of their apparent advantages and disadvantages, and of the reasons why intelligence deems them respectively to be less or more likely of implementation. National estimates sometimes discuss only the particular foreign capabilities which the intelligence community in its wisdom believes will actually be carried through. This is going too far in exclusion. Intelligence must winnow the mass of capabilities down to two or three or half a dozen

in each situation examined, but it is the responsibility of policy-makers, not of intelligence agencies, to decide which among these few last alternatives shall in fact constitute the intelligence basis for US policy.

IV

Looking back over old national estimates one is apt to feel that the borrowing of military terminology was sometimes a little over-enthusiastic. The word "capability," for example, offers an almost irresistible temptation to all of us who compose governmental gobbledegook. It is a long, abstract noun, of Latin derivation, and it has a pleasing air of technicality and precision. It will appear to lend portentousness to an otherwise simple statement. Perhaps this is why the word appears in estimates so frequently, unnecessarily, and sometimes even incorrectly.

One trouble is that the word has a perfectly good, non-technical meaning, signifying a quality, capacity, or faculty capable of development. It is commoner in the plural, when it usually denotes in a general way the potentialities of the possessor, as when we say that a man "has good capabilities." This usage is frequent in estimates:

- a. The air defense capabilities of the Bloc have increased substantially since 1945.
- b. Chinese Communist and North Korean capabilities in North Korea have increased substantially.
- c. The capabilities of the new fighter aircraft are superior to those of the old.

No valid objection can be taken to these examples. Indeed, the usage is virtually the same as that of the technical term, for the statements are about the things that the possessors of the capabilities can do.

SECRET

15

One can find, however, a good many examples of slipshod usage:

- a. Satellite capabilities for attack on Greece and particularly on Turkey are too limited for conquest of those countries.
- b. The Tudeh Party's capabilities for gaining control of Iran by default are almost certain to increase if the oil dispute is not settled.

There is no good reason for using the word "capabilities" in either of these statements; in the first the word should probably be "resources," in the second, "chances" or "prospects." If one really insists on talking about capabilities then the statements ought to be rephrased: "The Satellites are not capable of conquering Greece or Turkey," and "If the oil dispute is not settled, conditions in Iran will be such that the Tudeh Party may acquire the capability to gain control of the country."

It will be perceived that the immediately foregoing examples are statements of *net* capabilities, and it is in connection with such statements that imprecise drafting most frequently occurs. It must be remembered that in a relationship between two nations (or other organizations) the *gross* capabilities of one side can be increased or decreased only by an increase or decrease in the strength, resources, skills, etc., of that side; what happens on the other side is irrelevant. The *net* capabilities of one side, however, may be altered either by a change in its own strengths and resources or by a change in those of the other side. For example, suppose that the strengths and resources of the United States and the USSR both increase in the same proportion. Then the gross capabilities of each side will have increased, but the net capabilities will have remained unchanged. But, if the USSR should grow weaker, while the United States made no change in its strength, then the net capabilities of the United States would have increased although its gross capabilities remained unchanged.

SECRET

This is simple enough, but it needs to be understood if drafting is to be accurate and clear. Consider the following example:

In South Korea and Taiwan where US commitments provide both physical security and political support of the established regimes, present Communist capabilities for political warfare are extremely small. If the US commitment and physical protection were withdrawn for any reason, substantial and early Communist political warfare successes almost certainly would occur.

The first of the two sentences in this quotation can only be understood as a statement concerning gross capabilities, although to be sure the word is used in its non-technical sense. But the second sentence reveals that Communist gross capabilities, far from being "small," are in fact very considerable. The two sentences together constitute a statement of net capabilities, but the drafting is poor. Perhaps a rule to govern this problem may be formulated in this way: when the word "capability" or "capabilities" is used in its non-technical sense, signifying in a general way the qualities, faculties, or potential of the possessor, it must be used only to refer to gross, and never to net capabilities. If there is any question, doubt or difficulty, the word ought to be avoided and a synonym chosen.

Finally, even when using the word in its technical meaning of a specific course of action, the drafter ought always to make clear whether he is referring to gross or net capability. For example:

- a. We estimate that the armed forces of the USSR have the capability of overrunning continental Europe within a relatively short period.
- b. The Party almost certainly lacks the capability for seizing control of the Japanese government during the period of this estimate.

The first of these statements is unclear because the word "overrunning" does not indicate beyond doubt (as "conquer"

SECRET

17

or "defeat" do in some examples previously quoted) whether the statement is or is not one of net capability. Does the sentence mean that the armies of the USSR can overrun Europe against all the opposition that the West may put up? Or does it mean only that the USSR has enough men and logistical apparatus to spread into all of continental Europe within a relatively short period if unopposed? The second example is clearer, but still it does not indicate beyond doubt whether the Party is unable to seize power because the Japanese government is strong enough to prevent it, or whether the Party simply lacks the men and talent to take over the job of governing Japan even if no one opposed its doing so.

Apart from such suggestions for clarity in drafting as those given above, it would be premature to lay down rules for the statement of capabilities in a national intelligence estimate. Sometimes it may be desirable to list them *seriatim*, as the military generally do in their estimates of the enemy situation. This might be a wholesome exercise while drafting an estimate even if it were not retained in the final version, for it would tend to promote precision, to reveal inter-relationships and produce groupings of related capabilities, and thus to prevent the indiscriminate scattering through an estimate of statements of capabilities in bits and pieces. On the other hand, the number and complexity of courses of action which have to be presented may often be so great that extensive listing would be tedious, and attempts at grouping misleading. A connected essay (in which, incidentally, the word capability or capabilities need never appear) may convey the material far more adequately.

These matters will be improved by experimentation, and by the talent of those who draft estimates. Improvement is worth trying for, in this as in other aspects of estimating capabilities. It is a great and responsible task to survey the whole political, economic, and military strengths of a nation, to ascertain its objectives and the moral and political compulsions that govern its conduct, to weigh all these matters in the light of that

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nation's relation to other nations, to perceive what that nation could do to affect the security interests of the United States, and to select from among these manifold courses of action those sufficiently important and feasible to be included in a national estimate. The techniques of this task are still in a formative stage. They will develop through experience, through trial and error, through discussion and argument, and perhaps, from time to time, through purely theoretical and doctrinal investigation.

SECRET

19

## NOTES ON SOME ASPECTS OF INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATES

by [redacted]

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**M**EMBERS of the intelligence community will obviously find useful reading in the articles by Abbot Smith and Col. Kirtland.\* These studies deserve the attention of other groups as well. They are of particular value to military commanders and planners and to their civilian counterparts in both government and private life. The executive and the planner are the prime consumers of the intelligence product. Furthermore, since they and not the intelligence officer are ultimately responsible for action taken, they are and should be the sharpest critics of that product.

These consumers, therefore, need to understand the various kinds of approaches which the intelligence officer can make to his problem. In consultation with him, they should develop an agreed approach — embodying doctrines either as discussed in our military and other staff manuals or possibly as modified by ideas developed in these papers.

Business executives and planners were mentioned above along with military and government officials because study of modern business organization and practice makes it quite clear that the more effective enterprises engage in intelligence activities in one form or another.

To bring out the parallel with national and military intelligence, we may note that business intelligence comprises evaluated information concerning such matters as: the actual and potential users of the goods and services the business produces; the actions and plans of competitors; related goods and services; and other factors which bear on the production, marketing, and use of the product. Among the "intelligence

\* See below, p. 39, for review of Col. Kirtland's article.

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activities" in which most business organizations engage we can include market analysis, research and development, and the collection of general business information.

Market analysis is essentially an intelligence activity, for it covers not only what the product may or might do but also what other firms and products may do or are doing. Credit information on firms and individuals is perhaps the most direct form of intelligence used by business.

Research and development is an intelligence activity in the sense that it yields information on which to gauge the value of one's own product as well as that of actual and potential competitors. Research and development have become so important that investment analysts now consider the size and quality of this effort an important factor in determining the value of a security.

Finally, no business of any stature can plan without giving at least a quick glance at political, economic, and sociological data. It is inconceivable that either Ford or the UAW in 1954 planned for 1955 without considering international affairs, the domestic political situation, and the sociological "climate" which might make it propitious to raise the issue of the guaranteed annual wage. The tremendous growth in the number of trade and commercial publications is an indication of the interest in business intelligence information.

This is not the proper place to pursue this matter further and discuss whether or not business would improve its lot by openly recognizing its intelligence requirement and organizing more specifically for it. It is useful to note, however, that World War I taught business leaders the value of the line and staff principle of organization and that World War II has already given them clear object lessons in operations analysis and on research and development. "Business intelligence," full-fledged, may well be the next important step.

It has seemed worthwhile to mention this point because we want to go along with Mr. Smith who believes that military

intelligence doctrine has application in national policy processes. In fact, we want to go further and assert that the basic concepts — not necessarily all the detailed precepts and procedures — have application to *any* form of human activity: political, economic, scientific, or sociological.

There is some reason to suspect that both Mr. Smith and Colonel Kirtland have misinterpreted or misunderstood some of these basic concepts. We propose to deal with these misunderstandings as they come up in our discussion of the two papers. At this point, it is useful to cover one matter which both seem to have failed to keep clearly in mind. It is the fact that *both* the intelligence officer *and* the commander (or policy-maker) are in the estimating business.

#### **The Intelligence Function and the Command Function**

The intelligence officer is the "expert" on the enemy. Accordingly, he is charged with giving the commander, the staff, and subordinate commands the best information and estimates on the enemy situation. The end product of his estimate is enemy capabilities and — let us not forget — *where available information provides a basis for such judgment*, the relative probability of adoption of them.\*

This is a full-time job, particularly when one considers that the intelligence officer must also continuously provide his command — and, in addition, assist in providing subordinate, adjacent, and senior commands — with the information and intelligence they require for their day-to-day operations *as distinguished from* that needed for estimates. It is for this reason, rather than any slavish devotion to doctrine that, as Mr. Smith points out,\*\* some persons hold that the intelli-

\* FM30-5 and *Principles of Strategic Intelligence*, AC of S, G-2 (Feb. 50).

\*\* As Smith puts it: "We are told that it is the function of the commander, not of the intelligence officer, to decide what counteraction to adopt against enemy capabilities and to judge what the success of such counteraction may be."

gence officer should not deal in the capabilities and lines of action of his own side. Mr. Smith is correct in saying that some persons oppose this from wrong motives, but that is not a fault peculiar to the military. It should also be pointed out that many planners have a supercilious view of intelligence and intelligence officers. They fancy themselves equally competent in intelligence matters. Indeed, most of them are, but the reverse is also true. Most intelligence officers are fully competent planners. Since each has a full-time job, however, each needs to tend to his own knitting to get the job done well. There needs to be, and in good commands there is, continuous close liaison at all levels in the intelligence and plans sections. Historically it is true that many commanders have leaned as much or more on their intelligence officers in planning matters as they have on their planners. In even more cases, after the whole staff was thoroughly informed about the enemy, the role of the intelligence officer *appeared* to be less prominent. It is noteworthy that this usually occurs on the side that is winning or has a preponderance of force. When things are tight, the intelligence officer is in great demand and, we might note, his neck is way out.

We noted above that the commander also makes an estimate. His estimate takes the enemy capabilities — presumably as developed by the intelligence officer — and, in the light of each capability, studies each line of action open to the command to determine the one that *best accomplishes the mission*. He determines the lines of action open to him by having full information about his own forces — their position, condition, morale, supplies, supporting forces available and so on. Just as the intelligence officer contributes the information about the enemy, so many other staff officers contribute this other information which the commander must have to make a sound decision.

Let us then keep clearly in mind that, in military usage, the intelligence estimate sets forth the enemy capabilities. The commander, for his part, uses that estimate in conjunction

with other information (there may be a logistics estimate, an air estimate, etc.) and makes a final "policy" estimate to determine the line of action which will best accomplish his mission.

### **The Military Theory of Capabilities**

Many of the difficulties which Mr. Smith points out in the application of military usage in the field of national policy stem from the fact that in the national field we do not have the same common understanding of staff and command functions that obtains in the military. This is true both because the "staff" in national policy affairs, though to a degree comparable, is not a close parallel to a military staff, and because many of our policy-makers are not experienced in or familiar with staff functioning.

Against this general background, we can now examine Mr. Smith's advocacy of the concept of "gross" and "net" capabilities and his contention that war-gaming should be used to improve the usefulness of our intelligence.

In reference to the first matter Mr. Smith points out the need to recognize that enemy capabilities are one thing when we study them in the light of one of our own actions and quite different when we consider them in the light of another.

To indicate these differences he uses the expressions "gross capabilities" and "net capabilities." Use of these terms brings to mind the idea of a fixed measurable quantity like the gross income of General Motors and, similarly, that a "net capability" is like GM's net income. It is quite clear that such a concept is not accurate.

Pursued to the logical end, gross capabilities would be capabilities, as it were, in a vacuum. Such capabilities have no practical meaning, both because they are limitless (without opposition the Soviets can do almost anything) and because there are no true vacuums in world affairs.

In a sense capabilities are always "net." But they are fixed only in reference to one given set of conditions. As these conditions change, the capabilities change. They are a moving picture, not a still photograph. The Soviet "net capability" to induce a peripheral war in Thailand is one thing if Thailand has the political and other support of Burma and the SEATO states and quite a different thing if it does not have such support. Indeed, the timing and extent of such support changes the "net capability." In military usage capabilities are always what Mr. Smith calls "net." The intelligence officer determines the enemy's capabilities as of a given time and in the light of given circumstances.\* This idea is readily applicable in national strategic intelligence.

What Mr. Smith calls gross capabilities could perhaps better be thought of as "basic" capabilities. For example, intelligence officers can readily estimate that by 1959 the Soviets could have a stockpile of X hydrogen bombs, Y rounds of atomic artillery ammunition, Z intercontinental bombers, W army divisions, and V major naval craft, and could still meet the industrial requirements of their civilian economy, provided they give no more than the current level of military aid to Red China and the Satellites. On the other hand, if they curtailed production of equipment for the Red Army and Navy they could contribute more to the armament of China and the Satellites. These are capabilities. They are basic capabilities to produce or take general action not normally subject to interference. Further analysis and research can develop what, under various assumptions, the Soviets can do with these resources and thus can determine their capabilities to act. Perhaps it is this distinction that Mr. Smith has in mind when he speaks of "gross" and "net." Even if this is the case we would still be loath to accept the concept because, in the general sense of the term, even such "gross" capabilities

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\* See quotations from *Dictionary of US Military Terms for Joint Usage*, cited by Mr. Smith; also the description used at the Strategic Intelligence School.

SECRET

25

are "net." Rather than adopting misleading terms like "gross" and "net" we seem to be better off if we stick just to "capabilities" and understand it to apply, as in basic military doctrine, to a stated set of circumstances.

The second point in Mr. Smith's thesis that we wish to examine is the matter of war-gaming. He laments the fact that accepted practice frowns on having intelligence officers war-game the plans of their own side. We do not concede that this "frowning" is as prohibitively effective as Mr. Smith contends. To the extent that it does exist, it is directed against the idea of having the intelligence officer play both sides. This is logical. The intelligence officer cannot be "expert" on his own resources and plans as well as on those of the enemy. As pointed out earlier, the latter is a full-time job. To the extent that he thumps for *joint* war-gaming by intelligence and plans personnel as a device to assist in improving the usefulness of intelligence estimates, however, Mr. Smith is emphatically right.

War-gaming for this particular purpose is not used as widely in the military as it might be. But the concept of war-gaming for other purposes with all staff elements participating is well established. It could easily be used in the more complex field of national estimates.

War-gaming has been modified radically in recent years with the employment of advanced mathematics and electronic computers. These techniques leave much to be desired in the military field and many of them could, at the current stage of development, be used to only a very limited extent in reference to the "imponderables" of national policy affairs. The more conventional type of war-gaming, on the other hand, could certainly be used across the board and with every possibility of making our intelligence estimates more useful.

Mr. Smith's observation that national policy-makers have a more complex problem than military leaders is valid, and it has an important bearing on the activities of the intelligence

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services which support them. The national policy-maker must consider a great variety of "capabilities" which interact on each other. For example, a sociological change in Germany may have an important repercussion in the political capabilities of France. Furthermore, it is always difficult to determine the "facts" in many areas of interest. The military leader usually knows how many and what kinds of guided missile squadrons, atomic bombs, fleets, and army troops he and his opponent have. The political leader is always far less certain about his "forces" and those of his allies. There is even more uncertainty about the resources the enemy can bring to bear. To illustrate, we can be sure that Khrushchev's advisers have many a headache estimating how effective the Satellites and Communist China really are and what assets the West will actually apply in various situations. In such a field, therefore, there can be no one "net" capability. There are as many "net" capabilities as there are variant situations. Mr. Smith appears to think that intelligence officers should compute these "net" capabilities by their own efforts. It would seem more logical that they should be worked out in conjunction — and we do *not* mean concurrence — with the planners. Intelligence officers and planners must sit down together and thrash out all the angles. This is precisely what happens in an efficient military staff in time of war. The formal estimates of capabilities appear only when a radical change in one's own or the enemy situation takes place. For example, after "The Bulge," 21st Army Group conducted an extended and more or less "conventional" campaign to gain the Rhine. It was obvious that crossing that formidable obstacle would call for different types of action and support. An estimate of the situation was essential.\* This, in turn, meant that intelligence forecasts and estimates had to be produced. At such times a new "stock-taking" is in order. At other times, day-to-day close coordination by the working intelligence officers

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\* Both US and British strategic planners had long before been working on such plans. We are here considering the more nearly tactical planning.

and planners, with a check on interpretations of major importance by the senior intelligence and plans officers, is the best *modus operandi*. It keeps all concerned aware of enemy capabilities applicable to the prevailing conditions.

In the national field, a similar condition could obtain. Unhappily the lines of demarcation in staff organization are not as simple and clear as in the military. Instead of overall planners like those in the Joint Staff or in an international staff such as the Combined Staff Planners of World War II, we have political planners in State, military in Defense, economic in agencies like OES, propaganda in USIA, etc. Each of these has some form of intelligence support of its own. These intelligence agencies are tied together by CIA for national purposes and planning is brought together in the NSC. However, there is still a vast amount of "sprawling." Parenthetically, it should be noted that this statement is a description of a condition; it is not to be construed as an unfavorable criticism. This is not the occasion for such criticism; and it is by no means certain that highly centralized planning and intelligence would be best, or even better, for the country. Here, we want simply to note that close integration of intelligence into planning is difficult because of the decentralized planning and operating mechanism in the US government. A great deal of informal coordination on the working level does take place. This is all to the good and should be encouraged. This complexity of organization and operations in the national field results in a greater need for formalized estimates and is, in itself, a justification for the use of the war-gaming principle. However, with all due respect for the skill, wisdom, and judgment of our intelligence community, we should not leave war-gaming as a basis for decisions to them alone. The danger here is at least as great as it is to have the planners do it alone. We have suffered on both the military and the national plane from an unwillingness (or inability) to accept and understand available intelligence. We need not repeat such gross errors.

With little or no information of our own plans and resources, the intelligence officer can still tell the planner what resources the enemy can have at a future date and the general kinds of action he can initiate with them. If the commander and planner want to know what results the enemy can achieve with these resources and actions, the intelligence officer must have knowledge of his own resources and plans.

Applying this notion to the current situation, we can expect national intelligence officers to tell us what resources the Soviets will have for peripheral wars by 1959 without much guidance as to our own resources and national plans and policies. But they can tell us where and with what likelihood of success the Soviets can use those assets only if they know the opposition which the Soviet action is likely to meet. Joint war-gaming would provide such interchange of information. It should make for a healthy interplay between intelligence and planning and probably result in improving both.

#### **Estimating Enemy Intentions**

In Colonel Kirtland's paper we have a more restricted and therefore more specific subject for consideration. He objects to what he describes as "unrealistic resistance" to the use of intentions-analysis as opposed to capabilities-analysis in intelligence estimates. He holds that we need to consider both. By inference, he is most directly concerned with combat intelligence. He makes clear, however, that his conclusions apply to strategic intelligence as well.

After analyzing what Colonel Kirtland has to say, we can agree with his main thesis that both intentions and capabilities need to be considered. However, he has not hedged his proposal with essential safeguards and his arguments against the "capabilities doctrine" contain very serious weaknesses. We will review these arguments and then develop our own conclusions.

SECRET

29

In order to evaluate Colonel Kirtland's contentions, it is important that we have a common understanding of the meaning of "the capabilities doctrine." The burden of this concept is that in a combat intelligence estimate, the intelligence officer should present to the commander his best estimate of the enemy's capabilities rather than the enemy's intentions. The doctrine goes further: it holds that the commander in his estimate should consider *each* of the lines of action open to him in the light of *each* of the enemy capabilities in arriving at his final decision on a course of action. It is important to keep in mind that the doctrine has these two aspects: first, the intelligence officer is to determine capabilities; and second, the commander should make his decision only after considering *all* the capabilities.

An elaboration of this doctrine which is too often forgotten is that the G-2 is expected to give the commander his conclusion as to the relative probability of the exercise of any of the enemy capabilities, *where there is evidence to support such a conclusion.\**

Earlier doctrine had held that the task of the intelligence officer was to estimate the mission of the enemy and, from that, deduce the lines of action the enemy might take and then to determine their effect on the courses open to his own side. This doctrine invited a refined form of guessing as to the enemy mission and encouraged consideration of intentions in the deduction of enemy lines of action.

The new capabilities doctrine was developed after World War I because it was felt that earlier doctrine introduced too much clairvoyance into military problem-solving (which is what decision-making really is), and that it came too near urging officers to guess the worst the enemy could do and to stake everything on that. It was believed that the "capabilities" system was more "scientific" and more nearly in accord with the facts of life. This conviction was illustrated

\* FM 30-5.

SECRET

at the Command and General Staff School, just before World War II, when one of the instructors "clinched" the argument in favor of basing estimates on capabilities by showing that in World War I von Kluck had changed his mind four times in one day and actually issued three different orders.

A concomitant of the acceptance of the capabilities doctrine has been the growth of an attitude that anyone who advocates basing estimates on enemy intentions just hasn't been brought up properly. To advocate the use of intentions-analysis has come to be considered the equal of advocating mind-reading or the use of a ouija board. Advocates of intentions-analysis like Colonel Kirtland object more to this anti-intentions prejudice than to the capabilities doctrine *per se*.

In marshaling support for the thesis that our doctrine needs review and, in particular, needs to give more consideration to intentions, the critics tend to make some amazing misinterpretations and to neglect some crucial facts. We agree that our doctrine needs recasting but we must, in fairness, keep the record accurate and logical.

Colonel Kirtland's objection to current doctrine is based on three main points: first, "a nation or a commander must have a preponderance of force if he bases his decisions on capabilities alone"; second, "the resulting decision is always conservative"; and third, the enemy's potential capabilities are not adequately considered.\* We will examine each of these points in some detail.

The statement that the capabilities doctrine is useable only when you have a preponderance of force is clearly erroneous. It is a very practicable doctrine when you are on the defensive and even when you are the hunted in a pursuit. To hold otherwise is like saying you cannot use the principles of arith-

\* The third point is paraphrased because the actual statement is not very precise. However, subsequent explanation makes clear that it means what has been said here.

metic when you are in debt. The capabilities doctrine — and, for that matter, any other doctrine — gives you a discouraging picture in such cases, but that is the picture you must face. In an adverse situation, the doctrine is designed to indicate which line of action would have the least adverse result. In other words, it indicates the course of action which would get your nose least bloody.

The second criticism, that application of the doctrine generally results in conservative action, is to a large extent true; but it is true because, in matters of life and death, leaders generally tend to be conservative. Usually they should be. The criticism is justified only to the extent that the going doctrine makes it *easier* for leaders to be conservative. This is particularly true when officers take the view which an allegedly bright and "successful" officer (he later got a star) expressed when he said: "I teach my officers to select the line of action which gives them the best chance against what they figure is the enemy's most dangerous capability."

It is this use of the capabilities doctrine that brings on the criticism of conservatism. Actually it is a reversion to the older doctrine. It is, in fact, a form of intentions-analysis because the user assumes that the enemy will exercise a given capability. Such use does not condemn the doctrine itself, any more than the fact that some men get drunk justifies the condemnation of all whiskey. Current doctrine holds that the commander shall select the course of action which, in the face of all the estimated enemy capabilities, insures the *most effective* accomplishment of the mission. This is not the same thing as saying that he should select the one that gives the *greatest certainty* of accomplishing the mission. Clearly, the most certain course might be the most bloody while a slightly more risky line of action would be less costly and might accomplish the mission in a shorter time or have some other advantage. The selection of a line of action requires a balancing of costs and gains under the various possibilities. It also calls

for what is known as "military character." No matter whether we use capabilities or intentions, the decisions will reflect that character.

The third argument is that use of the doctrine prevents consideration of potential capabilities, meaning those that develop between the time the estimate is made and the action takes place. This, of course, is woven of the very flimsiest cloth. The doctrine is based on the use of capabilities which the enemy will have at the time of the action for which one is planning — not the capabilities at the time the decision is made. It is the capabilities forecast for the action-time. If one accepts the argument, he must also accept the conclusion that if intentions were used in the analysis, one could not use forecasts of intentions. On this score, then, one would be as badly off under one system as under the other.

One other serious error in Colonel Kirtland's paper that we must bring out is the failure to show that Army doctrine has for years made clear that in strategic intelligence — as distinguished from combat intelligence — *both* intentions and capabilities *are* considered. Official doctrine and teaching at the Strategic Intelligence School and at Army schools have emphasized this point at least since World War II.

#### **The Role of Intentions in Intelligence Estimates**

So far we have been concerned with showing that the arguments presented against the capabilities doctrine are not very good or conclusive. This is not the same as saying that we are trying to build a case against intentions-analysis. Actually, we do not intend to do so. We will weasel but, we believe, with good reason. We agree that use should be made of both capabilities and intentions in developing estimates, but we hold that one must be equally objective and "scientific" in determining either of them.

SECRET

33

Having noted that the common arguments against the capabilities concept are not too decisive let us note a few of the weaknesses of that system and indicate some of the strengths of the intentions approach.

The faults of the capability system are two-fold. First it tends, as Colonel Kirtland points out, to cause intelligence officers to include remote possibilities as capabilities. They forget that the doctrine calls for the consideration of only those capabilities which bear on the accomplishment of one's own mission. Second, and despite strong language to the contrary in Army training, the doctrine seems to justify lazy intelligence officers to feel that they have done their bit when they have made one forecast of capabilities. This is most unfortunate. Intelligence officers must keep capabilities under continuing study to narrow them down. For example, in September of 1943 the predicted capabilities of the Germans vis-a-vis the Normandy landings were of a given order. As time went on, the Allies developed certain techniques and equipment and new forces became available. On the Axis side, Italy was knocked out of the war, and the Germans committed some of their forces in new areas. Consequently, the enemy capabilities changed continuously so that by June 1944 they were far more limited than could possibly have been predicted in September 1943. SHAEF intelligence kept a continuous spotlight on these capabilities during this period. So it should be in all operations. The good intelligence officer keeps on the ball as long as there is time to influence his own side's line of action. In many cases the situation develops so that at a point the enemy has only one capability. This happened at Falaise and in the Ruhr. Eventually, the Germans could no longer disengage their forces. They had to stay and fight. This idea was also illustrated in General Eisenhower's statement to the effect that after a given time he could no longer influence the course of the Juggernaut that became the Normandy assault. For a considerable period he had only one capability. Just how long the German G-2 was useful

by keeping tabs on that has not been made clear. Our teaching does not emphasize this concept as clearly and firmly as it should.

As we have already noted, World War I provided a startlingly effective case to bolster the capabilities doctrine. Similarly, the Civil War and World War II give us particularly fine cases for defense of intentions-analysis. In the Civil War, opposing commanders often knew each other personally. They used this knowledge in their planning. They knew the training, abilities, and personalities of their opponents and, hence, could determine the line of action the enemy was most likely to take. In a sense, of course, this too is an assessment of capabilities but there is no point in splitting any unnecessary hairs. In ordinary language, such an evaluation results in a prediction of intentions. There is a grey zone where capabilities slide into intentions, but for our purposes, we will lean to the conservative side and call the borderline cases intentions.

The World War II support for intentions-analysis is in some ways even stronger. It stems from the fact that the Japanese tendency to fight to the death was so effectively ingrained that, to a very marked degree, capabilities to take other lines of action were not meaningful. To a lesser extent this same situation applied in the European war where Hitlerism molded capabilities.

One can make a very good case for the contention that enemy intentions should properly be considered under the capabilities doctrine because they are a factor in the combat efficiency of the enemy. To accept such an interpretation without clearly labeling it, however, would simply be a way of getting around the intent of the doctrine and have the disadvantage of not calling intentions by their true name.

Experience in all walks of life shows clearly that a failure to make a thorough study of one's opponent to determine his motivations and his mental and psychological reactions as a basis for estimating his future action is worse than

unwise. The press is full of stories that the USSR is very active in this field and has attained great successes, perhaps as a concomitant of progress in brain-washing and psychological matters generally. In our zeal to make sure that training will make commanders and intelligence officers "objective" and "scientific," we may have gone so far that we have tended to overlook the obvious. Certainly, the mental makeup and attitude of the enemy is as much a "fact" as is his training, his morale, his organization, or his weapons. Surely then it is logical to consider intentions. Equally surely, it is important to do so objectively and to know what you are doing. If you are an intelligence officer, it is most important that you alert your chief to the fact that you are considering intentions.

In the discussion so far we have used examples and applications in the purely military field. The conclusions are valid in national intelligence as well. In fact, intentions of a nation or a government can be determined with more accuracy than those of an individual commander. These intentions are shaped by many clearly observable facts such as past actions, sociological conditions, cultural characteristics, internal political pressures, economic circumstances, and a host of others. The British exploited their understanding of German intentions in both World Wars and it was not uncommon to hear their intelligence officers use such expressions as: "the Hun is sure to — — —," and "the German probably appreciates." They personified the enemy government and high command. On the other hand, the Germans seem consistently to have missed the boat. They clearly either did not or could not evaluate US and Russian national intentions properly in either of the World Wars. The evaluation of national intentions involves a more comprehensive field of thought than does the evaluation of the intentions of an enemy commander. However, the task is no more difficult. Even if it is, it must be done because the rewards for success and the costs of failure are too great to permit neglecting the job.

Where does all this get us? It seems to indicate that, as Colonel Kirtland says, a proper doctrine would be to include both capabilities and intentions in all estimates as we now do in the strategic estimate. However, we should expand the principle to include insurance that staff and command training will impress on all concerned that they need to apply the most rigid tests to all evidence bearing on intentions and that conclusions based upon them clearly show that this is the case.

Since all concepts and doctrines wind up in a "form" of some sort, we might as well present a proposal on that score, too. In the military field the solution is easy. All we need to do in the commander's estimate \* is to insert a paragraph on "enemy intentions." The intentions paragraph need be only a brief statement, either to the effect that there are no reliable indications of enemy intentions or that certain stated evidence indicates an intention to exercise one or more of these capabilities.

In the intelligence estimate, we need merely insert that "combat efficiency" includes knowledge of enemy personal characteristics which shape or have a major influence on his actions. In addition, we should add a paragraph on enemy intentions similar to the one suggested for the commander's estimate. This one should also present the critical evidence upon which the estimate of intentions is founded.

Such a detailed analysis of combat intelligence doctrine is warranted at this juncture because, as Mr. Smith points out, so much of the concept and procedure of combat intelligence has found its way into the national strategic intelligence process. The additions to military command and intelligence estimates which we have proposed here could be paralleled in our training for national strategic intelligence.

Our current doctrine probably goes too far in playing down intentions-analysis. Going all out the other way would cer-

\* FM 101-5

tainly be worse. It would encourage clairvoyance and, in addition, might discourage the continuous effort to seek for new indications of capabilities. The stress on measurable physical facts is justified. While we are making important strides in understanding and measuring motivation and mental processes, we are not yet far enough along in that field to measure intentions as precisely as we can capabilities and, as Colonel Kirtland notes, the danger of deception is a very real one. Even so, since decision-making is so inevitably bound up with consideration of the personal element, it is the better part of discretion, and of valor as well, to consider intentions. They are so often the sparkplugs of human action.

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## BIBLIOGRAPHIC SECTION

**EDITORS NOTE:** Whenever books or articles appear that have a close relation to the subject of a monograph, we plan to include a Bibliographic Section. This will have the primary purpose of directing the reader's attention to items in the existing literature, overt and classified, which in our judgment make a contribution to the development of sound intelligence doctrine. We think the following is one such item.

**Col. Sanford H. Kirtland, Jr., "The Hazards and Advantages of Estimates of Enemy Intentions."** Thesis, Air War College, Air University, Maxwell AFB, April 1954. MSS. CONF. 50pp.

also summary in *Air Intelligence Digest*, January 1955.

In this paper, Col. Kirtland comes frankly and vigorously to grips with the *caveat* in traditional military intelligence doctrine against estimating enemy intentions—or, to put it another way, against breaking down the distinction between enemy capabilities and enemy intentions. Col. Kirtland is far from contemptuous of this doctrine; indeed, he makes an excellent case for it, emphasizing the dangers of second-guessing and of assuming that the enemy will choose to do pretty much what a US commander would do, in a similar situation. He emphasizes, too, the danger of writing up an Estimate of the Situation from even the shrewdest guess of enemy intentions, thus inviting disaster if the guess turns out to be shrewd but wrong. In brief, this thesis is no hatchet job.

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40

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What it is, on the other hand, is a most sensible investigation of the traditional doctrine and an invitation not to fall into a variety of naive traps where the estimative process is concerned. First of all, the author points out that the distinction between capabilities and intentions is sometimes synthetic. The line can be more easily drawn in the abstract than it can in real situations — especially, we might point out, in situations that count the most, when a US commander has to spread out thin resources to meet a variety of possible enemy moves. Any intelligence officer (as Mr. Smith argues above) obviously works from estimates of intentions in that he excludes from his situation-estimate a whole series of outlandish and, from the enemy point of view, self-defeating gross capabilities. If the clear enemy objective is to seize a piece of land, it is not very instructive to point out that he is *capable* of an immediate, orderly retreat.

Second, according to Col. Kirtland, the intelligence officer is forced into estimating intentions (or *probable* courses of action) precisely because the US is no longer in a position of undoubted preponderant power from which it can prepare for and can thwart any and all enemy capabilities. Which is to suggest that the traditional doctrine is outdated. As Mr. Smith says:

There has been much debate, among the military, on whether an intelligence officer should presume to put into his formal estimate an opinion as to which of the enemy capabilities listed is most likely to be implemented . . . Some have even held that the commander himself must not make it, but must treat all enemy capabilities as if they were sure to be carried through, and must prepare to deal with them all. *This latter doctrine is somewhat academic.* (Emphasis added.)

Col. Kirtland and Mr. Smith both seem to be saying that these days the intelligence officer may pay lip service to the traditional military doctrine — may insist that he is follow-

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41

ing the book on the distinction between capabilities and intentions — but cannot possibly keep the distinction clear in practice.

Finally, the author concludes that there is no inherent drawback in estimating intentions: to do so with reliability simply puts the burden on finer judgment, on better background and training, and on better personnel selection of estimators. He might also have added that since estimating intentions is what the intelligence officer in fact does, some of the time at least, it would be well that he do it consciously. The real danger is that the estimator might think he is dealing with relatively sure and scientific capabilities data (claiming relative certainty for his conclusions, therefore) rather than with speculative premises about enemy intentions.

Col. Kirtland is writing, of course, strictly about military intelligence. But most of what he says can be translated into the frame of reference of the civilian intelligence agency — as Mr. Smith's paper demonstrates — with some valuable instruction for all of us. This is, at the least, a thoughtful contribution to the subject.

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